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ABSTRACT

The field of Religion and Literature has long been plagued by a lack of clear focus and identity. Both the American Academy of Religion and the American Library Association have felt this lack strongly enough to commission surveys of the field. This study applies the quantitative measures of bibliometrics to periodical literature within the field in order to better grasp its intellectual focus and to assess its interdisciplinarity. For this purpose, two or three year runs of three Religion and Literature periodicals are analyzed in regard to authorship, content and citation patterns. Findings suggest a field in which a relatively diverse group of scholars pursue close analysis of literary texts in the light of particular bodies of both secular and religious thought, but without strong commitments to current methodological schools. Interdisciplinarity is clearly not based here on a shared set of theoretical assumptions, but merely on the diversity of authors and works represented. The conclusions drawn from this analysis should be useful both for the selection of library material and for subject classification. Suggestions are made for further study of the field. The Coding Sheet is appended. Eleven tables present study results. (Contains 24 references.) (Author)

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A STUDY IN INTERDISCIPLINARITY: BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS OF PERIODICAL PUBLICATION IN RELIGION AND LITERATURE

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

Kevin L. Smith

June, 1996

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ABSTRACT

The field of Religion and Literature has long been plagued by a lack of clear focus and identity. Both the American Academy of Religion and the American Library Association have felt this lack strongly enough to commission surveys of the field. This study attempts to apply the quantitative measures of bibliometrics to periodical literature within the field in order to better grasp its intellectual focus and to assess its interdisciplinarity. For this purpose, two or three year runs of three Religion and Literature periodicals are analyzed in regard to authorship, content and citation patterns. Findings suggest a field in which a relatively diverse group of scholars pursue close analysis of literary texts in the light of particular bodies of both secular and religious thought, but without strong commitments to current methodological schools. Interdisciplinarity is clearly not based here on a shared set of theoretical assumptions, but merely on the diversity of authors and works represented. The conclusions drawn from this analysis should be useful both for the selection of library material and for subject classification. Suggestions are made for further study of the field.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The comparative study of religion and literature is a very old pursuit. In the West, its roots are probably to be found in Plato's condemnation of poetry and in the attempts of neo-platonists such as Sallustius (4th century CE) to reinterpret the poetry of Homer and Hesiod as religious allegory in order to remove its offense.[1] Serious critics of later works, by Dante and Milton for example, have always been obliged to study the religious content of the Commedia or Paradise Lost as closely as they study the poetic forms; the two are simply not separable. Yet the recognition of the field of religion and literature as an independent and interdisciplinary field of academic study is relatively recent, and the boundaries of the discipline remain very much in dispute.

Disagreement and uncertainty about what is and is not encompassed by the field of religion and literature (R & L) are as old as the formal establishment of the field itself. The University of Chicago began to offer the nation's first Ph.D. in R & L in 1968. Yet in 1971 Giles Gunn, one of that programs first graduates, could already write as follows:

> Even a rapid scanning of some of the work which has been done in this area will quickly disclose the broad range of critical theory and method which has

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[1] See Michael Murrin, The Veil of Allegory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 40-50. On Plato's condemnation of poetry as irreligious, see Iris Murdoch, The Fire and the Sun: Why Plato Banished the Artists (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

> characterized it. The spectrum seems to run all the way from those who seek to elucidate the manner in which literature can be instructed by doctrine or doctrine "fleshed out" in literature to those who conceive of literature, as Baudelaire says somewhere, as "a metaphysics made sensible to the heart and expressing itself in images."[2]

The two poles which Gunn identifies - that which examines particular literary texts for religious imagery or content versus that which seeks an overall metaphysics by blending religion with literary theory - still define the major divide within this discipline today.

Indeed, the passage of time has not led to any resolution of the tensions and divisions within the academic study of religion and literature. In an "evaluative bibliography" of the field prepared for the American Library Association in 1975, Vernon Rutland calls R & L "an umbrella with a tremendously wide span." He goes on to describe the "rumored illegitimacy, miscegenation and identity crises" which inevitably accompany "so diffuse an interdisciplinary exchange."[3] Other scholarly bodies have had similar worries; in the early 1990s the American Academy of Religion surveyed its members in hopes of obtaining a more coherent map of the R & L landscape and deciding on the appropriateness of a standing religion and literature section within that body. Although the section was retained, the map

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[2] Giles Gunn, Introduction to Literature and Religion, edited by Giles Gunn (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1971), 3.

[3] Vernon Rutland, Horizons of Criticism: An Assessment of Religious-Literary Options (Chicago: American Library Association, 1975), 3 & 5.

remains elusive. A new professor in the field, preparing her first syllabus for an introductory course, still likens her task to "sewing a button on ice cream."[4]

Although its identity crisis has not been resolved, the academic study of religion and literature continues to grow. At the time of his study, Rutland identified only Chicago, Syracuse and Emory as universities where programs in R & L were available.[5] Since then, other private institutions, such as LaFayette College, have added programs or faculty positions in the field, as have several state university systems, such as Virginia and North Carolina. Periodical literature has expanded along with the field, both in journals dedicated to inter-disciplinary research and in more general theological organs. Yet the problem of identifying the boundaries of, and dividing lines within, the field of religion and literature have persisted; each attempt to suggest outline seems to suffer from the subjectivity of the author's own perspective. So as the field has grown, these problems have grown right along with it.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to use objective measures to try to define the boundaries of the field of religion and literature and to identify major rifts and fissures within it.

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[4] Carol Thysell, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, in an electronic mail message to the author, January 12, 1996.

[5] Rutland, 8.

One of the major issues to be addressed is whether R & L is indeed a single, interdisciplinary field of study or whether several distinct types of academic endeavor are sheltering under this very wide umbrella.

A distinction between those articles which take a literary critical approach and those which are more theoretical is obvious after even a brief examination of religion and literature periodicals. But how sharp and how rigid is this division? Do authorship characteristics differ significantly on the two sides of the critical/theoretical divide? Do the two groups of articles employ different methodologies, or make reference to very different groups of texts?

On the literary-critical side, what works of literature are chosen for study? Does one era or genre dominate? Are particular methodologies employed or identified? On the theoretical side, are specific methodological schools or theoreticians cited? Do any such groups or people seem to be dominant?

By using objective measures to study these questions, it should be possible to obtain an outline of the field of Religion and Literature. Such an outline can be of service of librarians in several ways. Studies of this type are especially useful in the selection of library material. Does research in R & L at a given institution focus either on critical or theoretical work? Are there core texts, either literary or methodological, which are indispensable for the field? Answers to questions of this

type are important for determining how and where a collection should be developed.

A clear sense of the field's outline is also useful for indexing and classification. Currently, H. W. Wilson's Religion Indexes simply uses the term "religion and literature" for most work in this field. But in the Library of Congress classification system, books on R & L may end up either in the PN 49s (Literature (General)-- philosophy, ethics, religion) or in the BL 65s (Religion in relation to other subjects). By determining if Religion and Literature is one field or two, and what it encompasses and excludes, more informed decisions can be made regarding the assignment of descriptors and classifications.

Thus this study is intended as a first step in the objective assessment of Religion and Literature as an academic field, in the hope that such an assessment will be of significant benefit to librarians who work with R & L materials.

Definitions

Critical Article - For the purposes of this study, a critical article will be defined as an article where the major focus is a close examination of one or more literary work.

Theoretical Article - An article which attempts to reflect on the general nature of the field of Religion and Literature or the impact on that field of a particular philosophical, theological or literary movement.

Authorial Affiliation - For the purposes of this study, the significant affiliation of an author is the academic department in which he or she is employed, i.e. English, theology, etc. If the author is not an academic, note will be taken of whether he or she is a clergyperson or a writer.

Nationality - In this study, nationality will be recorded based on the country in which a scholar lives and works.

Literary Work - A work of prose fiction or poetry which is subjected, either as a whole or in part, to detailed analysis.

Methodology - Any body of theory or school of thought which is identified as the guiding principle behind a literary analysis or which is suggested as the underpinning of a theoretical position. For the purposes of this study, a methodology must be explicitly identified; it will not be inferred. The possibility of synonyms for the same methodology (i.e. feminist and womanist) must be allowed for.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Although no bibliometric analysis in the area of Religion and Literature has yet been carried out, there are several types of previous studies which do indeed provide useful models and results for the present undertaking.

Using bibliometrics to examine periodical literature and thus draw conclusions about a particular field is a fairly common research project. Many scientific fields have been studied in this manner, as have some areas of the social sciences; it is a much rarer undertaking in the humanities. One field which has been well analyzed using these methods is library and information science; some of theses studies provide methodological archetypes and suggest the kind of data which can be helpful in examining an academic field.

Lois Buttlar studied both content and authorship characteristics in sixteen library journals in a 1991 study. Among her major findings are the observation of a slow closing of the gender gap in library science publication, especially among special librarians, and the conclusion that academic librarians account for nearly two-thirds of the scholarly publication in this field. She also examined such issues regarding authorship as professional standing or type of librarianship practiced, and geographic location of the author. In regard to the content of articles, Buttlar found an increase in the percentage of research-based articles, following a decline in the mid-1970s.

She also provides an analysis of the most popular subjects for articles in library periodicals, including a cross-tabulation of subject with author's gender.[6]

Another study, by Paschalis Raptis, focuses on authorship characteristics in five international periodicals dealing with library science. Given his restriction to journals in English, however, his findings that British and American authors dominate and that authorship characteristics are very similar to those found in American periodicals, are probably not very surprising. Raptis also did some limited citation analysis to discover the more frequent use of international reports (from IFLA or the UN, for example) in these periodicals.[7]

Studies similar to these two have also been carried out on specific journals. Mary Sue Stephenson gathered data very similar to that collected by Buttlar, but for a ten year run of the Canadaian Library Journal. In her study, Stephenson also found the gender gap that Buttlar documents, as well as the steady increase in research-based articles.[8] In their study of articles from JASIS, Stephen Harter and Patricia Hooten add another type of data to those already discussed, the funding

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[6] Lois Buttlar, "Analyzing the Library Periodical Literature: Content and Authorship," College and Research Libraries 52 (January 1991): 38-53.

[7] Paschalis Raptis, "Authorship Characteristics in Five International Library Science Journals," Libri 42 (1992): 35-52.

[8] Mary Sue Stephenson, "The Canadian Library Journal 1981-1991: An Analysis," Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science 18 (July 1993): 1-18.

status of a piece of research.[9] These articles, and others like them, provide excellent models of the kind of data useful when one is seeking what Cole and Bowers refer to as "the sociology of the literature."[10]

Another kind of study which helps illuminate the current project is that which explicitly examines the periodical literature of religious studies. Up to this point, these have seemed to focus on Biblical studies, and to have employed mostly citation analysis. A paper by Maureen Gleason and James Deffenbaugh demonstrates particularly well the usefulness of bibliometric analysis for collection management. In that study, a random sample from a five-year run of three major Biblical journals was subjected to citation analysis. The resultant list of cited items, which could be manipulated by such criteria as language, was used to evaluate the utility of the Notre Dame University collection for Biblical studies.[11] In the process the authors have demonstrated nicely the relevance of bibliometrics in the humanities.

Terry Heisey has focused his study on literature obsolescence and the two different scholarly approaches to the

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[9] Stephen Harter and Patricia Hooten, "Information Science and Scientists: JASIS, 1972-1990," Journal of the American Society for Information Science 43 (October 1992): 583-593.

[10] Quoted in Buttlar, 39.

[11] Maureen Gleason and James Deffenbaugh, "Searching the Scriptures: A Citation Study in the Literature of Biblical Studies: Report and Commentary," Collection Management 6 (Fall/Winter 1984): 107-117.

Dead Sea Scrolls. He uses citation analysis, and a theoretical base provided by Thomas Kuhn's famous The Structure of Scientific Revolution, to distinguish rather sharply between studies of the Qumran material which take the humanistic approach characteristic of Biblical studies, and those based on the more scientific discipline of archaeology.[12] Heisey's employment of bibliometric means to distinguish two very different kinds of study of the same material is a particularly important example for the present project, as an attempt is made to differentiate between critical and theoretical approaches to Religion and Literature.

Perhaps the most important research in this area, however, is done by Moshe Itzchaky, whose 1979 Ph.D. thesis at Rutgers University is the paradigm for citation analysis in Biblical studies used both by Heisey and by Gleason and Deffenbaugh.[13] His findings regarding core literature, obsolescence rates and citation patterns provide the yardstick used by later writers to assess their own results. Yet even more important to the present study is Itzchaky's 1986 article on mutual dependence between Biblical studies and ancient Near-East studies. Here he uses citation counting to determine how genuinely interdependent the

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[12] Terry Heisey, "Paradigm Agreement and Literature Obsolescence: A Comparative Study in the Literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls," Journal of Documentation 44 (December 1988): 285-301.

[13] Moshe Itzachy, "The Structure and Citation Patterns of the International Research Literature of Biblical and Ancient Near-East studies: A Bibliometric Approach to the Development of a Discipline." (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1979).

two fields are. His finding that the rates of mutual use between the two fields are very low suggests a rather unexpected dichotomy.[14] Like Heisey's study discussed above, this paper offers an example of how bibliometrics can be used to find the fissures and divisions within a field.

In general, there are even fewer relevant bibliometric studies in literature than there are in religious studies. Still, broader studies of the information needs of literary scholars do give us useful background information. Constance Gould, as part of a more wide-reaching examination of information needs in the humanities, documents some interesting conclusions about literary studies.[15] She suggests, for example, that interdisciplinary work in this area is increasing - precisely the point we are testing regarding religion and literature. She also asserts that the emphasis on individual authorship in literary studies is diminishing. This, too, is a point to be examined with regard to R & L. It is especially interesting to note that a literature survey about information needs in the humanities done in 1994 confirmed one of these results but disputed the other. According to Rebecca Watson-Boone, literary scholarship is indeed becoming more interdisciplinary, but, she asserts, it

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[14] Moshe Itzchaky, "Determining the Mutual Dependence Between Two Related Disciplines by Means of Citation Analysis: The Case of Biblical Studies and Ancient Near-East Studies," Libri 36 (1986): 211-236.

[15] Constance Gould, Information Needs in the Humanities. Stanford, CA: The Research Libraries Group, Inc., 1988.

is still pursued by individual scholars, working alone.[16]

Studies of interdisciplinarity are the last type of study to be examined. It should be clear from the previous discussion that this is an important issue to assess in Religion and Literature, and it is an aspect of scholarship which bibliometrics is well-suited to evaluate. In an article on sociology and interdisciplinarity, Sidney Pierce discusses the way in which conflicting assumptions within two branches of the same field may prevent a unified bibliometric analysis.[17] Yet as has already been seen, Itzchaky and Heisey have turned this warning around and used the differences encountered to draw dividing lines within a field. Pierce's comments about institutional resistance to interdisciplinary research provide a theoretical basis for explaining the divisions encountered by Itzchaky and Heisey as well as those expected to be encountered in the present study.[18]

Other articles suggest specific ways in which interdisciplinarity can be measured. Daryl Chubin and his associates attempt a general characterization of inter-disciplinary research by examining a sample of "citation classics" from the Institute for Scientific Information. They

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[16] Rebecca Watson-Boone, "The Information Needs and Habits of Humanities Scholars," RQ 34 (Winter 1994): 203-216.

[17] Sidney Pierce, "Sociology and Bibliometrics," in Scholarly Communication and Bibliometrics, ed. Christine Borgman (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, 1990), 46-58.

[18] Pierce, 50-53.

look at both the intent of the author(s) and the usage of the original paper by others in order to characterize inter-disciplinarity. Although their conclusions are rather tentative, they do provide a list of potential questions for further study in this area which is useful for preparing this project.[19] Buchanan and Herubel, on the other hand, feel that they are quite successful in using bibliometric measures to establish the truly interdisciplinary nature of the field of historical geography.[20] The Canadian scholar Yves Khawam turns traditional citation analysis around in his study of the "dispersion" of references to the literature of artifical intelligence, using these "measures of dispersion" as a yardstick of interdisciplinary appeal.[21] These searches for interdisciplinarity provide this study with a measure against which to compare Religion and Literature. From all three types of bibliometric studies - authorship and content studies in library science, examination of information needs and uses in both religious and literary studies, and analyses of interdisciplinarity - this present undertaking can gain insight and direction.

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[19] Daryl Chubin, Allan Porter and Frederick Rosini, "Citation Classics Analysis: An Approach to Characterizing Interdisciplinary Research," Journal of the American Society for Information Science 35 (1984): 360-368.

[20] Anne Buchanan and Jean-Pierre Herubel, "Inter-disciplinarity: The Case of Historical Geography through Citation Analysis," Collection Building 14 (1994): 15-21.

[21] Yves Khawam, "L'apport de la bibliometrie aux recherches interdisciplinaires: La cas de l'inteeigence artificielle," Documentaliste: Sciences de l'information 29 (1992): 129-135, (author's translation).

III. METHODOLOGY

Bibliometrics, according to Danny Wallace, "is the application of quantitative methods to the study of information resources."[22] This study applies such methods to three journals in the field of Religion and Literature. Authorship characteristics, content and citations are all examined. The goal is to arrive at a better understanding of the intellectual structure of the field and to begin to form an opinion as to its interdisciplinary nature.

Regarding authorship, the characteristics of gender, nationality and affiliation are analyzed in order to determine who the practitioners are in this field. Of particular importance is the issue of affiliation. Do theologians dominate the field, or are literary critics doing most of the writing? It is also to be expected that some clergy and literary artist make contributions.

For the study of content, an initial division of articles into broad categories seems appropriate. The distinction between articles focused on the critical analysis of literary texts, those engaged in theoretical reflection and those which are literary works in themselves underlies much of the subsequent analysis. In a recent article on the relationship between

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[22] Danny Wallace, "Bibliometrics and Citation Analysis" in Principles and Applications of Information Science for Library Professionals, ed. John Olsgaard (Chicago: American Library Association, 1989), 10.

religion and literature, Carolyn Jones neatly defines these "two conflicting strains":

> The first strain defined Arts, Literature and Religion as dealing primarily with the canonical literature, music and visual art of the West to explore traditional religious themes... The second strain, which could be called a cultural studies/theory group, wanted to include in the discipline, perhaps to restructure the discipline in line with, a relatively new post-modern discourse and a turn to material culture and performance.[23]

One interesting avenue to pursue is the comparison of authorship characteristics within and between these broad categories. Other content data which have been recorded are the literary texts studied and the dates and languages of those texts. This data is useful for determining if any particular era or genre of literary work is a predominant focus of the field.

The last content datum examined is methodology. Whenever an author states that a particular methodology is being employed or a specific theory examined, that has been recorded and tabulated. If a particular theoretician, either literary or theological, is named, that too was recorded. Whenever it is possible to identify named persons with a methodology, they are included in that tabulation. For this purpose, and for establishing a tentative list of possible methodologies, Frank Lentricchia's well-known survey, After the New Criticism, has been very

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[23] Carolyn Jones, "Dietrich Bonhoffer's Letters and Papers from Prison: Rethinking the Relationship of Theology and Arts, Literature and Religion," Literature and Theology 9 (September 1995): 253f.

useful.[24]

Finally, citations for each article were analyzed regarding their date and the type of material (i.e. book or article) cited. This information can be cross-tabulated with the categories of articles in order to determine whether citation patterns indicate a sharp distinction between critical and theoretical articles.[25] The method by which all this information has been recorded is illustrated by the sample coded sheet attached (Appendix A).

Three journals have been selected for this project. The first criteria by which they were chosen is that each purports to publish interdisciplinary research in Religion and Literature. Secondly, each is a well established publication; the most recent of them has been in circulation for over seven years, while the other two have been around for over twenty years each. Finally, these journals are widely available -- they are even held at Kent State, where no Religion and Literature courses are offered -- and hence may be considered most influential. For each journal the most recent two years available will be studied, and all material except book reviews will be analyzed.

The following journal titles and volumes have been selected:

Christianity and Literature, published quarterly in the United States since 1951. Volumes 42/1 through 44/2 (1993 - Winter 1995).

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[24] Frank Lentricchia, After the New Criticism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

[25] This method is used successfully by both Heisey and Itzchaky, "Determining Mutual Dependence."

Literature and Theology, published quarterly in England since 1987. Volumes 8 through 10/1 (1994 - March 1996).

Religion and Literature, published thrice yearly in the United States since 1968. Volumes 26 and 27 (1994 and 1995).

When articles in these journals have more than one author, information about each individual Has been recorded. In tabulation, each individual is to be treated as a separate entry.[26] The same procedure is followed when analyzing the literary texts discussed, since it is quite likely that some articles will discuss more than one text.

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[26] This procedure is explained in the article cited above by Paschalis Raptis, who himself cites the previous work of John and Jane Olsgaard as precedent.

IV. FINDINGS

The selected journals yielded a total of 139 articles, covering 2,232 pages. These articles contained 3,120 footnotes which made, discounting explanatory notes and others which contained no new reference, 2,752 references. An examination of these articles and their references provides an interesting snapshot of the field of Religion and Literature, a picture which does not always accord with the assumptions with which this study began.

Types of articles

The division of Religion and Literature articles into those which are theoretical and those which are critical definitely exists. Indeed, the distinction is quite obvious and easy to detect in the process of coding. But the field seems to be heavily weighted toward the critical pole of this dichotomy; of the 139 articles, 85 of them, or 61.1%, are critical, while only 44, or 31.7%, are theoretical (see Table 11). The remaining 10 articles (7.2%) are literary works -- five poems, one short story and four essays which present personal reflections on the religious aspects of reading or of the creative process.

When one looks at the number of pages dedicated to each type of article, the heavy predominance of critical articles gets a little bit stronger. A total of 64.1% of pages are critical articles while only 31.2% are theoretical. The remaining 4.7% of

the pages are the literary works. Clearly Religion and Literature focuses more on the critical examination of literary texts than might have been suspected.

Authorship characteristics

Authorship characteristics provide a number of very interesting results, both in regard to the division between types of articles and for the field as a whole. The most striking is perhaps the absence of co-authorship. Only one of the 139 articles had more than a single author; that article was jointly written by two people. It is also the case that a large percentage of authors wrote only one article within the sample. Only nine authors (5 men and 4 women) had more then a single article; eight of these wrote two articles. One man, a clergyman from Australia, wrote three articles included in this study. The Bradford curve for this field, therefore, would be even steeper than usual.

Gender

When the entire set of 140 authors is examined by gender, the result is, at first glance, not surprising (see Table 1). The ratio of 65% men and 35% women is very close to the national average, as reported by The Almanac of Higher Education.[27] Even the slightly higher percentage of women writing critical articles

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[27] That book, edited by the staff of The Chronicle of Higher Education (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), reports a national division amongst university faculty of 67.5% male and 32.5% female (p. 58f).

(40%) is still consistent with the gender ratio within the humanities disciplines.[28] When the theoretical articles are examined, however, a surprisingly large group, 80 percent, proved to be written by men. It appears that the theoretical side of Religion and Literature holds a greater interest for male authors, while the critical scrutiny of specific texts is the preferable activity for women.

Affiliation

By far the best-represented profession amongst the authors is that of English or literature professors. Indeed, 55% of all the writers shared this affiliation. This fact must count as something of a surprise, since most Religion and Literature faculty positions are within religion departments. Religion professors were the next largest group represented, with 16.4%. Only 3.6% of the authors were explicitly identified as holding appointments in R & L, although some of those listed as religion professors may well specialize in R & L. Philosophy professors (5%) and clergy (4.3%) round out the top five affiliations.

When affiliation is studied by type of article, the results are as might be expected. A much larger percentage of theoretical authors came from religion and philosophy departments; indeed, those two affiliations account for 37.8% of the theoretical authors, a percentage equal to that of literature professors in the same group. But within the critical division, literature professors represent 68.2% of the authors. Given that

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[28] Ibid.

critical articles dominate the literature by two to one, English and literature professors clearly form the solid backbone of the R & L field.

Nationality

Since two of the periodicals examined in this study are published in the United States and the third in England, it is not surprising that these nationalities predominate among the authors. Overall, 65.7% of the authors work in the United States and 10% in England. Among the other 24.3%, a large number of other nationalities are represented, however (see Table 3). It is reasonable to conclude that, although American authors predominate, R & L work does have a broad appeal across many cultural and linguistic lines. It is also interesting to note that countries other than the United States are home to 48.8% of the authors of theoretical articles, while far fewer critical authors (29.4%) come from outside the United States. Just as the theoretical side is much more male than the critical, it is also more international.

Works discussed

The analysis of these articles found 160 detailed discussions of literary works. The critical articles naturally accounted for the majority of these discussions, although some theoretical articles did contain such discussions. The most frequently analyzed writer was William Shakespeare, whose work was discussed six times. Since Shakespeare is not commonly

thought of as a 'religious' writer, this is slightly surprising. More obviously, Dante and Milton were each discussed four times, as was the contemporary poet Richard Wilbur, to whom a special issue was devoted. If, however, one also counts the four discussions of Dante as a critic or theoretician (see Table 8), he than becomes the most discussed literary figure. St. Augustine and the American short story writer Flannery O'Connor were each discussed three times.

Genre

So at the top of the R & L "canon" of texts one finds Shakespeare, Dante and Milton. This is a rather conservative and traditional top three, corresponding exactly, for example, to the leading lights of Harold Bloom's decidedly anti-multicultural list of The Western Canon.[29] But further analysis complicates this picture. For one thing, the genre most often analyzed by these articles is the novel, discussed 45% of the time (see Table 4). This surely suggests that R & L focus on rather more modern literature. Poetry, a much older form and the second most frequently analyzed genre, is quite far behind the novel, at only 20.6%. Interestingly, only 6.9% of the discussions dealt with Biblical texts. So in spite of the prominence of individual "classic" authors, the overall tendency in Religion and Literature begins to appear more modern and diverse.

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[29] Harold Bloom, The Western Canon (New York, Harcourt and Brace, 1994).

Date

This impression is strengthened by an analysis based on the date of the works discussed (see Table 6). Over 42% of those works date from the second half of the twentieth century, and a total of 57% come from this century as a whole. Another 15% come from the nineteenth century, leaving only about a quarter of the works discussed (28% to be exact) which predate 1800. Obviously critics working in R & L study a much more modern group of literary texts than the traditional "Western canon" usually includes.

Language

That English is the dominant language of the literary texts studied is hardly startling (see Table 5). After all, of the top five author nationalities in the sample, all but the Israelis are native English speakers, and even in Israel a great deal of university instruction is carried on in English. So it is safe to conclude that literary critics tend to examine works written in the language with which they are most familiar; given the nature of the work it could hardly be otherwise. Still, the total of 15 languages represented in these studies does suggest a fairly diverse group of texts being studied. Hebrew and Greek, which are numbers two and three on the list respectively, include both Biblical texts and modern texts written in those languages.

Methods employed

It is an academic commonplace these days that literary

studies has become the province of theorists and the site of major battles between methodological schools. Whole university departments have become identified with these schools, so that, for example, only those who call themselves deconstructionists are likely to be teaching in Yale's English department. Since by its very name the field of Religion and Literature declares its concern with some body of theoretical reflection (religion), it might be expected that R & L would be right in the thick of these battles over methodology. Yet the sample studied here suggests that this is not the case (see Table 7). It has already been seen how critical work dominates over theoretical in the field. Now, as methodology is explicitly examined, one finds more evidence that theoretical partisanship is not an issue here.

For one thing, only 51 articles, or 36.7% of the total of 139 articles, even make explicit use of an identified body of theory. Also, no one or two theories appear to dominate or to struggle for domination; those 51 articles make use of 19 different methodologies. The most frequently mentioned methodology is the rather conservative school of hermeneutics, especially identified with the philosophers Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, and it is only mentioned 7 times. The schools of literary theory which have recently stirred up so much heated debate -- deconstruction, post-modernism, feminism and reader-response theory -- are each employed by fewer than 10% of those articles which do identify a method. So overall Religion and Literature seems to avoid the battles over theory and to employ

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specific methodologies only infrequently and in limited situations. There seem to be few sweeping claims to encompass the field in a single method and few dedicated partisans among R & L authors.

Named people

So far, this study has suggested that Religion and Literature is a field rather akin to older forms of literary studies. It seems to focus on the critical reading of literary texts and to largely avoid the debates over literary theory. It is primarily the province, it seems, of English professors and literary scholars. A new twist to this picture is introduced, however, when the issue of named people is examined.

What are the professions of the people R & L authors turn to when looking for a body of thought against which to read a text? Since most of our authors are literature professors, is it not reasonable to assume that they turn to literary critics? Yet this is decidedly not the case (see Table 8). Interestingly, the largest group of people named in these R & L articles is also not theologians, but rather secular philosophers. Of the 58 people who are named as significant sources for reflection in these articles, 24 of them, or 41.4%, are philosophers. Theologians are next, at 34.5% (20 out of 58). Only 24%, or 14 out of 58, of these named people are literary critics.

Of course, some people are named more than once. Dante and Jacques Derrida are the most frequently named, each cited by four

different articles. But when mentions are examined rather than people, the results are hardly changed at all. Philosophers are still the largest class (40.3%), followed by theologians, with literary critics as the smallest group. As a matter of some interest, it should be noted that 75% (15 out of 20) of the theologians are Protestant.

With this piece of the puzzle, one begins to see what makes Religion and Literature distinctive. On the one hand, its practitioners seem to be primarily literary critics doing old-fashioned close readings without a great deal at stake in the fashionable debates over theoretical schools. But if they do not identify themselves with the schools of method, they do turn to thinkers and to bodies of thought outside their own field. The works of particular philosophers and theologians are used as filters through which literary texts are read. It is not even necessarily an explicit religious commitment which defines this body of work. Rather, its distinctive feature seems simply to be the application of a theoretical template, usually the thought of an individual rather than an established methodology, to the reading of a literary text.

Citations

When citations from these Religion and Literature articles are examined, two startling results are brought to the fore. One is the preponderance of books discovered when the citations are analyzed by type of material cited (see Table 9). Over 70% of

all the references are to books rather than periodical articles or other material. In the theoretical articles alone, where more reliance on current journal publications might be expected, the percentage of books in the citations is actually even higher, at 73.3%. By contrast, Terry Heisey, in his study of archaeology and Biblical criticism applied to the Dead Sea Scrolls, found only 44% of his citations were to monographs.[30] So this is a real surprise, and again suggests that R & L work is not "cutting edge," so to speak, but a rather traditional and old-fashioned form of literary study.

The other surprise found in this citation analysis, which is really anticipated by the analysis of article types discussed above, is that there is almost no difference in the average date of cited materials between the critical and theoretical articles (see Table 10). Amongst the critical articles, there is a citation half-life of about 29 years, which means that 50% of the citations date from 1977 or later. Nearly 32% of these citations are ten years old or less. The theoretical articles have a citation half-life of 28 years, with 33.9% of the cited material ten years old or less. The absence of any major difference between the two types of articles in this regard confirms that even in articles about theory there is no strong dependence on current periodical literature. This should confirm the previous conclusion that R & L largely avoids the current debates about theory and method which today dominate most literary studies.

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[30] Heisey, 296.

It should be noted that the overall 32.6% of R & L citations which were found to be ten years old or less, when compared with results for a variety of disciplines collected by Itzchaky and Heisey, do place Religion and Literature at the high end of the humanities.[31] That is, R & L citations are in general more current than theology or history (with 20% and 22% of citations in that category respectively) but less current than economics or political science. In fact, the percentage for R & L is very close to that found by Heisey for Biblical archaeology, suggesting that those disciplines within religious studies which relate themselves to another field do tend to need to keep more current, a need apparently driven by the external discipline.

Also, perhaps because its interdisciplinary nature demands citation from two fields, R & L articles tend to have quite a lot of references. In his study of library science literature, for example, Paschalis Raptis found about 2,800 citations distributed over 196 articles.[32] This gives an average of 14.4 citations per article. In the R & L literature, however, a similar number of citations (2,752) was found in only 139 articles. The average number of citations per article is thus quite a bit higher at 19.8 per article.

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[31] Heisey, 291.

[32] Raptis, 45.

Table 1. Authorship by Gender and Type of Article.

Gender	Theoretical		Critical		Lit. Work		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Male	36	80.0	51	60.0	4	40.0	91	65.0
Female	9	20.0	34	40.0	6	60.0	49	35.0
Totals	45	32.1	85	60.7	10	7.2	140	100.0

Table 2. Authorship by Affliation and Article Type.

Affliation	Theoretical		Critical		Lit. Work		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Lit. Prof.	17	37.8	58	68.2	2	20.0	77	55.0
Rel. Prof.	15	33.4	8	9.4	0	0	23	16.4
Phil. Prof.	2	4.4	5	5.9	0	0	7	5.0
Clergy	2	4.4	3	3.5	1	10.0	6	4.3
R & L Prof.	4	8.9	1	1.2	0	0	5	3.6
Film Prof.	0	0	2	2.4	0	0	2	1.4
Ph.D. Student	0	0	2	2.4	0	0	2	1.4
Humanities	1	2.2	1	1.2	0	0	2	1.4
"Fellow"	1	2.2	1	1.2	0	0	2	1.4
Writer	0	0	0	0	5	50.0	5	3.6
Other	3	6.7	4	4.6	2	20.0	9	6.5
Totals	45	32.1	85	60.7	10	7.2	140	100.0

Table 3. Authorship by Country of Publication and Article Type

Country	Theoretical		Critical		Lit. Work		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
American	23	51.2	60	70.6	9	90.0	92	65.7
English	9	20.0	5	5.9	0	0	14	10.0
Canadian	2	4.4	6	7.1	0	0	8	5.7
Australian	1	2.3	5	5.9	0	0	6	4.3
Israeli	4	8.9	2	2.3	0	0	6	4.3
Scottish	2	4.4	2	2.3	0	0	4	2.9
German	2	4.4	1	1.2	0	0	3	2.1
French	0	0	1	1.2	1	10.0	2	1.4
Other	2	4.4	3	3.5	0	0	5	3.6
Totals	45	32.1	85	60.7	10	7.2	140	100.0

Table 4. Works Discussed, by Genre.

Genre	f	%
Novel	72	45.0
Poetry	33	20.6
Non-Fiction	16	10.0
Drama	14	8.8
Film	7	4.4
Short Story	5	3.1
Biblical Text	11	6.9
Letters	1	0.625
Native American Myth	1	0.625
Total	160	100.0

Table 5. Works Discussed, by Language

Language	f	%
English	112	70.0
Hebrew	9	5.6
Greek (ancient & modern)	8	5.0
French	7	4.4
Latin	5	3.1
German	4	2.5
Italian	4	2.5
Dutch	3	1.9
Russian	2	1.3
Czech	1	0.625
Danish	1	0.625
Arabic	1	0.625
Spanish	1	0.625
Polish	1	0.625
Lakota (Native American)	1	0.625
Total	160	100.0

Table 6. Works Discussed, by Date.

Date	f	%
1951 - 1996	68	42.5
1901 - 1950	23	14.4
1800s	24	15.0
1700s	3	1.9
1600s	13	8.1
1500s	4	2.5
1100 - 1499	6	3.7
500 - 1099	2	1.3
0 - 499	6	3.7
BCE	11	6.9
Total	160	100.0

Table 7. Methods Employed.*

Method	f	%
Hermeneutics	7	12.5
Feminism	5	8.8
Post-Modernism	5	8.8
Deconstruction	4	7.1
Mythological	4	7.1
Rhetorical	4	7.1
Ethical	3	5.4
Reader-Response	3	5.4
Dialogism	3	5.4
Negative Theology/Death of God	3	5.4
Typology	2	3.6
Ideological/Political	2	3.6
Mimesis	2	3.6
Linguistics	2	3.6
Psychoanalysis	2	3.6
Existentialism	2	3.6
Structuralism	1	1.8
New Criticism	1	1.8
Franciscian Mysticism	1	1.8
Total	56	100.0

* Total is greater than the 51 articles explicitly identifying a methodolgy, since some articles employ more than one.

Table 8. Named People, by Profession.*

Profession	Number of People		Number of Mentions	
	f	%	f	%
Philosopher	24	41.4	35	40.3
Theologian	20	34.5	31	35.6
Literary Figure	14	24.1	21	24.1
Total	58	100.0	87	100.0

* A total of 79 articles named 58 people as sources for theoretical or critical reflection.

The following people in each profession were named more than once:

Philosopher	f	%	Theologian	f	%	Literary Figure	f	%
J. Derrida	4	16.6	K. Barth	3	15.0	Dante	4	28.6
P. Ricoeur	3	12.5	Augustine	3	15.0	H. Bloom	3	21.4
M. Bakhtin	3	12.5	G. Von Rad	3	15.0	N. Frye	2	14.3
N. Berdiaev	2	8.3	Kierkegaard	2	10.0	G. Steiner	2	14.3
J-P. Sartre	2	8.3	T. Aquinas	2	10.0			
H. Gadamer	2	8.3	H. Frei	2	10.0			
E. Levinas	2	8.3	P. Tillich	2	10.0			
			J. Calvin	2	10.0			

Table 9. Format of Material Cited, by Article Type.

Format	Theoretical		Critical		Totals	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Books	774	73.3	1,172	69.1	1,946	70.7
Articles	258	24.4	463	27.3	721	26.2
Other	24	2.3	61	3.6	85	3.1
Totals	1,056	39.4	1,696	61.6	2,752	100.0

Table 10. Age of Material Cited, by Article Type.

Date	Theoretical		Critical		Totals	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
1991 - 1996	155	14.7	175	10.3	330	12.0
1986 - 1990	203	19.2	365	21.5	568	20.6
1981 - 1985	150	14.2	260	15.3	410	14.9
1971 - 1980	201	19.0	285	16.8	486	17.7
1961 - 1970	120	11.4	201	11.9	321	11.7
1951 - 1960	50	4.7	91	5.4	141	5.1
1941 - 1950	28	2.7	46	2.7	74	2.7
1931 - 1940	17	1.6	36	2.1	53	1.9
1921 - 1930	20	1.9	33	1.9	52	1.9
1911 - 1920	3	0.28	14	0.83	17	0.62
1901 - 1910	10	0.94	13	0.77	23	0.84
1851 - 1900	26	2.5	42	2.5	68	2.5
1801 - 1850	17	1.6	22	1.3	39	1.4
1701 - 1800	15	1.4	11	0.65	26	0.94
1601 - 1700	6	0.57	39	2.3	45	1.6
1501 - 1600	4	0.38	20	1.2	24	0.87
1401 - 1500	2	0.19	3	0.18	5	0.18
1301 - 1400	8	0.76	3	0.18	11	0.39
Older	21	2.0	37	2.2	58	2.1
Totals	1,056	38.4	1,696	61.6	2,752	100.0

Table 11. Article Type, by Number of Articles and Pages Allotted.

Article Type	Number of Articles		Pages	
	f	%	f	%
Critical	85	61.1	1431	64.1
Theoretical	44	31.7	697	31.2
Literary Work	10	7.2	104	4.7
Totals	139	100.0	2,232	100.0

V. DISCUSSION

Several years ago, a young man who was newly enrolled in the Religion and Literature graduate program at the University of Chicago Divinity School confided to me that he had no real interest in the study of religion, but had been told by an undergraduate professor that that program was the best place to study the most current literary theories. The young man was a committed partisan of the school of deconstruction, and his tenure at the University of Chicago proved very difficult. He left the program before the academic year was over, sadly disillusioned over the fact that neither his professors nor his colleagues shared his enthusiasm for the latest literary fad. I have often pondered over his experience, and suspect that in this study are the beginnings of an explanation. The findings of bibliometric analysis of the periodical literature in R & L provide clues as to both why the young man was sent to a Religion and Literature department and why he found it so unsatisfying.

On the one hand, there is certainly some reason to suspect that R & L focuses more on the modern than other literary studies and that it is especially concerned with theory. By its very name Religion and Literature connects the study of literature to a body of theoretical reflection. And this study has shown that R & L articles tend to stress a more modern set of literary texts. The dominance of the novel, the most modern of genres, is evidence of this fact, as is the high percentage of twentieth

century materials found in the analysis of works discussed. Also, a large number of methods and literary theories were examined and employed by the articles in this study. Even though critical work was more popular, a concern with theory is still very evident. The large and diverse group of named people certainly confirms this assertion; perhaps the defining aspect of R & L scholarship is the tendency to read a literary text through the template of some particular scholar's philosophy or theology. The large number of secular philosophers in this group even suggests that a specific religious commitment is not a prerequisite for use in the field. So there was some logic to the University of Chicago student's choice of a Religion and Literature program.

On the other hand, the factors that led to his disappointment are equally clear. Most of the articles in R & L are not focused on theory, but are critical readings of specific texts. Although individual thinkers are brought to bear on those readings, R & L seems to steer clear of the current division of the literary world into methodological and theoretical camps. no one or two methods dominate; theories of method seem to be used like tools to advance a particular argument, rather than as talismans that demand allegiance. Overall, the approach of R & L scholars is rather old-fashioned. Most articles are written by single authors, reflecting an older model of the individual man or woman wrestling with a text, not the more collaborative model suggested by the image of a "school" of literary theory. And

although they appeal to philosophers and theologians for perspective, most of the authors are themselves literature professors.

From these reflections, however, we do not need to conclude that the field of Religion and Literature is hopelessly schizophrenic. The contrary indications can indeed be reconciled into a unified picture of the general tendency of R & L work. By and large the authors are literature professors, with a two to one chance of being male. They work alone, using primarily monographic literature in their studies. Most often they subject one or more literary text to critical scrutiny and avoid involvement in the intense debates about theory that rage in other parts of the academy. All these factors suggest that R & L is a refuge of sorts, where an older form of close reading can be pursued. But what is read, and how it is read, is not old-fashioned at all. The R & L "canon" is quite modern, focused primarily on the twentieth-century novel. And the distinctive way in which R & L scholars read these texts is through the lens of some body of philosophy or theology. This bibliometric analysis suggests that Religion and Literature is a field where a fairly wide variety of authors can examine texts in the light of particular bodies of theory, whether or not those theories are explicitly religious, without having to declare allegiance to any side in the contemporary debates over method and ideology.

What does all this say about the interdisciplinary nature of the field of Religion & Literature? Since one of the major

indications of this study is that no single methodology is dominant in the field, it is fair to conclude that the interdisciplinary nature of R & L is not based on a unified set of theories or methods. There is no body of shared assumptions which define what work is or is not a part of the field. Indeed, although Protestant theologians are mentioned more often than their Roman Catholic counterparts, not even an explicit religious commitment, whether Catholic or Reformed, can be found to glue the field together. Only the tendency to use some body of theoretical reflection, usually from outside the ranks of traditional literary studies, seems nearly universal in R & L studies. Thus interdisciplinarity is defined in this field, not by the unity of its shared assumptions, but by the diversity of the ways in which it crosses academic boundaries. Indeed diversity -- among authors, methods employed, people named, and works studied -- may be the real defining mark of R & L. As was suggested above, there is a particular format for work in Religion and Literature, the reading of literary texts through the lens of non-literary thought, but the authors, the texts and the bodies of thought come from all over the intellectual terrain of the humanities.

Thus this field could be said to pose a classic challenge for library collection development. How, given this kind of interdisciplinarity, is one to know what will be needed next? Without a defined and shared theoretical foundation, how does a library attempt to support the discipline? However, for the

librarian this problem is made less acute by the fact that R & L does seem to pull its resources from within the traditional resources of the various humanities. The philosophers and theologians encountered by this study are not obscure or unknown; they are the leading lights of their respective fields. If a library can support solid programs in these areas, the chances are that it can support work in R & L. Perhaps the most important resource for library support of Religion and Literature, however, is a strong collection in modern literature.

Further bibliometric study of R & L would certainly help clarify this problem, as well as the field as a whole. I would suggest that the most important next step, especially to clarify the nature of the interdisciplinary relationship between religion and literature, is a more detailed citation analysis of work with the field. This study has suggested that diversity is the distinctive mark found within the literature, a conclusion that may create more problems than it solves. An in-depth analysis of exactly the sources and subjects of the material being cited in R & L, and hence the material most needed to support work in the field, might go a long way toward illuminating these remaining problems.

APPENDIX A: CODING SHEET

ARTICLE TITLE:

CRITICAL

THEORETICAL

LIT. WORK

SOURCE _____

PAGE LENGTH _____

AUTHOR _____ CO-AUTHOR _____

GENDER: ___Male ___Female ___Male ___Female

NATIONALITY _____ _____

AFFILIATION:

___	Lit. Prof	___	
___	Rel. Prof	___	
___	R&L Prof	___	
___	Clergy	___	
___	Writer	___	
_____	Other	_____	

WORK(S) ANALYSIZED: _____

_____

_____

_____

LANGUAGE: _____ DATE: _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

Coding Sheet

METHOD OR THEORY EMPLOYED:

NAMED PEOPLE:

NUMBER OF REFERENCES _____

REFERENCE DATES:

1991-1995_____

1986-1990_____

1981-1985_____

1971-1980_____

1961-1970_____

1951-1960_____

1941-1950_____

1931-1940_____

1921-1930_____

1911-1920_____

1901-1910_____

1851-1900_____

1801-1850_____

1701-1800_____

1601-1700_____

1501-1600_____

1401-1500_____

1301-1400_____

Older_____

REFERENCE TYPE:

Book_____

Article_____

Other_____

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